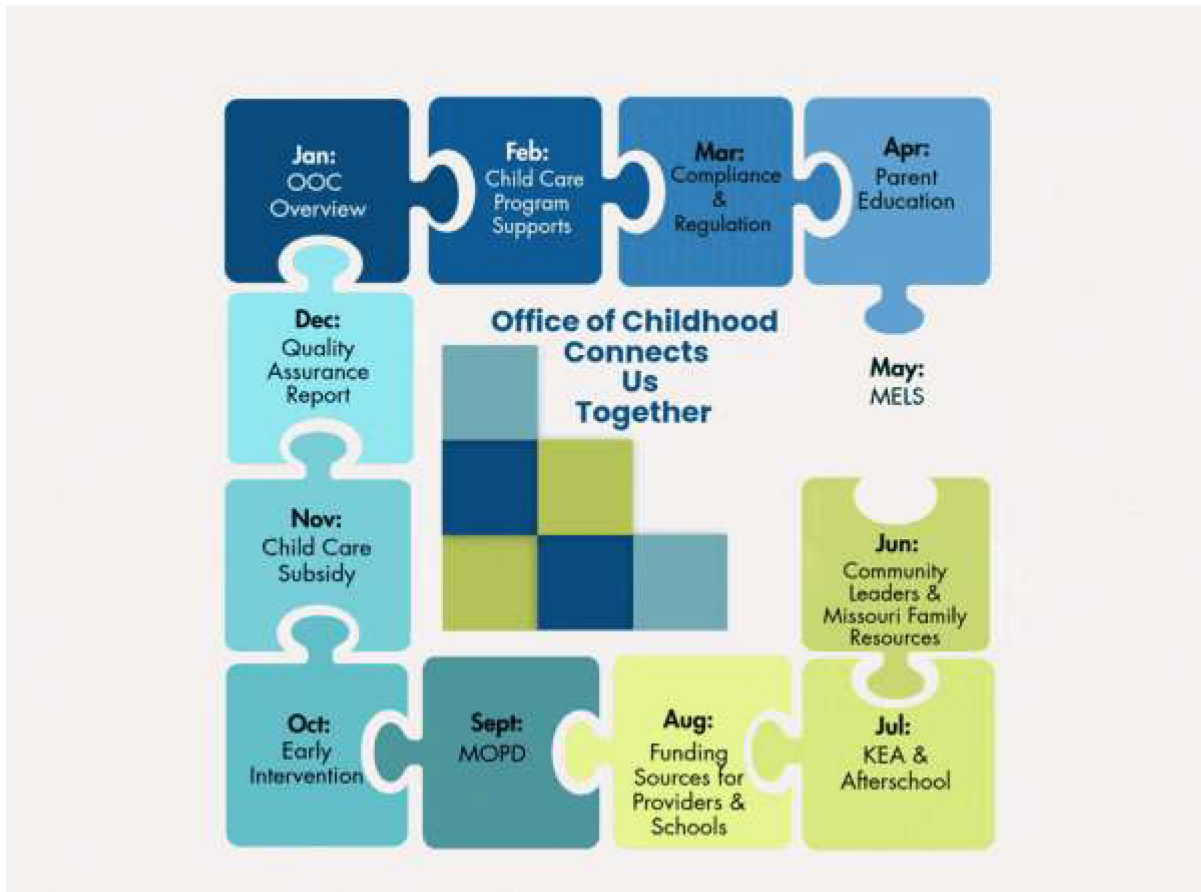




Childhood Connections

May 21, 2026

Office of Childhood Connects Us Together



In 2026, we are taking a closer look at the Office of Childhood (OOC) by exploring different programs that work together to strengthen children and families, and the professionals that support them. In this year's newsletter series, we will spend each month highlighting different OOC programs. OOC is composed of many unique and connected parts, and each plays an important role. Together, all these programs are part of a larger system that supports families statewide. Our intent is to show how OOC programs fit together to create a better understanding of the work.



As part of our yearlong journey through the Office of Childhood (OOC), this month we are highlighting the Missouri Early Learning Standards or MELS. The Missouri Early Learning Standards are an important framework that helps early childhood professionals, families, and communities support children from infancy through kindergarten entry.

The Missouri Early Learning Standards are a framework of expectations for what children can do and learn during their early years. Classroom teachers, child care providers, parent educators, higher education faculty, and state agency staff worked together to create the standards. The standards have been updated to include infant and toddler development standards, more examples, and more activities for families and educators. This collaborative approach created a resource that reflects child development, helps families, and supports early childhood programs.

Read about these important standards, the history of their implementation, and how they can help you in the [full article on the Office of Childhood Newsfeed](#).

NEWS

Important Subsidy Payment Update



The State of Missouri MOVERS accounting system implementation has been delayed for another fiscal year. As a result of the delay, DESE must continue child care payments through the current SAMII system. SAMII is scheduled to shut down the same as it did last year for the state fiscal year rollover process. The shut down is scheduled from **June 26 through July 13, 2026**. The last day for DESE to process claims is **June 24, 2026**, for which child care subsidy payments should be deposited within **7-10 business days**.

During the shut-down period from June 26 through July 13, 2026, DESE is unable to process claims or dispense child care subsidy payments. Please plan accordingly for the delay in child care subsidy payments during this timeframe.

Child care providers should continue to submit invoices as normal in the Child Care Data System (CCDS) during the temporary shutdown. The invoice status will indicate "Invoiced" during the timeframe. **Once SAMII is open on July 9, 2026, DESE will pay all pending invoices loaded in CCDS**, which will be deposited within **7-10 business days**. Once the claim is processed by DESE, the status in CCDS will change from "Invoiced" to "Process Payroll."

We apologize for any inconvenience this temporary statewide accounting system shutdown may cause.

Comprehensive Background Check Process Changing July 2026

Effective July 1, 2026, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will no longer cover the cost of fingerprinting as part of



the Comprehensive Background Check Process. This decision is based on budgetary needs and the large amount of unauthorized submissions. The rest of the Comprehensive Background Check Process will remain the same

It is important to remember that the [Comprehensive Background Check Notification form](#) must be submitted and the fingerprint authorization email must be received **before** the fingerprint process can be completed.

As a reminder, the redetermination process for individuals with expiring determination letters can begin 60 days prior to the expiration date.

Determination letters expire five years from the date of the letter.

If you have any questions regarding the process, please email the OOC Background Screening Unit at ocbackgroundchecks@dese.mo.gov.

An Important Update on the Dolly Parton Imagination Library



The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Office of Childhood, launched Dolly Parton's Imagination Library statewide on November 8, 2023. Due to the 2027 Fiscal Year state budget reduction, beginning **July 1, 2026**, Dolly Parton Imagination Library will not have the funds to accept new applications to the program. DESE–OOC will continue providing books to families already enrolled as funding allows.

Missouri Family Resources



Missouri Family Resources (MFR) is a free, statewide resource website and mobile app that houses a variety of local resources for families with young children. It is designed to be used by families and professionals. Resources available include, but are not limited to, early childhood, food, housing, medical and mental health, recreation, and safety.

Some key features of the website and mobile app are:

- Users are not required to set up an account
- Users may search by program features, eligibility criteria, and geographic location
- Users can print their search results or share them via email, text, or social media

- Users can suggest resources, submit resources, or even contact a resource directly through the website

To learn more information about MFR, please visit our [Missouri Family Resources webpage](#).

A Message from Waynesville R-VI's Superintendent Bales



Hilary Bales, Waynesville R-VI School District's Superintendent, has important information about the Missouri Parents as Teachers (PAT) Parent Education Program. She shares how it supports families and children in their district, from the very beginning leading toward school readiness. [Visit the Waynesville R-VI YouTube Channel](#) to view her message.

Missouri Parents as Teachers and Early Intervention Professionals Endorsed by MOAIMH-EC



The Missouri Association for Infant and Early Child Mental Health (MOAIMH-EC) provides the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement (IECMH-E) to professionals equipped to integrate infant and early childhood mental health principles into their practice.

OOC is honored to recognize parent educators serving families through the Missouri Parents as Teachers (PAT) Parent Education program and Early Intervention professionals serving families through the Missouri First Steps program for receiving this endorsement.

Visit the [MOAIMH-EC Endorsement webpage](#) to learn more about this opportunity, or read [this article on the Office of Childhood Newsfeed](#) for a list of Missouri professionals achieving this endorsement. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition!

EVENTS

Missouri Supporting Early Childhood Administrators Learning Academies Opportunity



Calling all early childhood administrators: the Missouri Supporting Early Childhood Administrators (MO-SECA) is hosting a series of learning academies focused on leadership and business management topics.

In June, there will be two learning academies.

- **June 5-6, 2026**, at the Wyndham Executive Center in Columbia, MO.
- **June 26-27, 2026**, at the Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel in St. Louis, MO.

MO-SECA will also host additional learning academies in July and August. For more information about the learning academies or to register, visit the [MO-SECA Learning Academy webpage](#).

Child Care Provider Appreciation Day



Child Care Provider Appreciation Day gave us an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the incredible dedication of child care professionals throughout our community.

To honor the occasion, a special video was created featuring more than 40 statewide child care providers under the theme “Child Care Providers Are Superheroes.” The video celebrated the compassion, patience, commitment, and support providers bring to children and families every day.

[You can view the Child Care Provider Appreciation Day video here.](#)

Thank you to all child care providers for the important work you do to help children and families.

DESE Celebrated National Home Visiting Week (April 20–24)



DESE was proud to celebrate National Home Visiting Week, not only with the *Missouri Parents as Teachers Parent Education Home Visiting programs* and *Missouri First Steps programs*, but with all home visiting programs across the state.

Thank you to all home visiting professionals who work to meet the unique needs of families and their children by promoting healthy development, strengthening relationships, and providing valuable resources. It is these early connections that support thriving communities in our great state.

Governor Kehoe recognized the importance of home visiting programs and the work of the DESE and the OOC in supporting early childhood development with a proclamation.

Highlights

Celebrating a Legacy of Learning: A Successful 53rd Conference on the Young Years



DESE - OOC, is proud to celebrate the tremendous success of the 53rd Annual Conference on the Young Years (CYY).

This year CYY welcomed nearly 1,800 attendees representing seven states. As it has for more than 50 years, CYY provided high-quality learning opportunities that supported growth, collaboration, and innovation.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the 53rd Annual Conference on the Young Years. We look forward to continuing this proud tradition as planning begins for next year's landmark event.

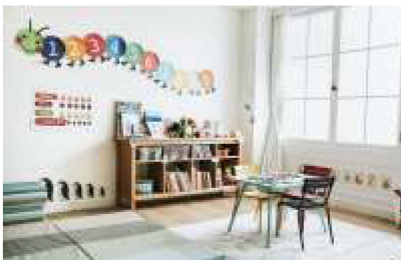
Keep an eye on the [CYY webpage](#) for future updates on the 54th Annual Conference on the Young Years. Read the [full article on the Office of Childhood Newsfeed](#) for more information on this incredible event.

QAR Program Highlights



Congratulations to the programs that achieved a quality designation through the Quality Assurance Report (QAR). [Read this article for the list of programs.](#)

MOPD Monthly Tip



Your MOPD ID stays with you throughout your career, no matter where you work in Missouri's early childhood system. To keep access to your account, use a personal email address instead of a work email. You can update your account's email if you are already logged in. Please don't create another account with a different email.

Reach out to the MOPD System Navigators at MOPD@dese.mo.gov with any questions.

Job Vacancies



The OOC is hiring and we would love to have you join our team! Click [this link](#) to see open positions.

Miss Something?

[Visit the OOC webpage to find previous editions of Childhood Connections.](#)

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